



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES



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Contacts: Sherry Llewellyn, HCPD, 410-313-2236
Maria Hogg, HCDFRS, 410-313-6039

Howard County Fire and Police Departments partner in active shooter training

*Initiative marks first coordinated training of **all** sworn members from both agencies*

In an effort to more effectively respond to active shooter incidents, all sworn personnel in the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue Services (HCDFRS) and Howard County Police Department (HCPD) are participating in a newly-created joint training program designed to get help to victims sooner.

The new active shooter training, which began in March, emphasizes a unified approach and marks the first time both public safety agencies have trained together department wide. By the end of May, all career operational HCDFRS and sworn HCPD personnel will have completed the training program.

“Preparing for any possible situation is something we strive for as a county,” said County Executive Allan H. Kittleman. “We want our emergency personnel to be fully trained and prepared. This type of cooperative initiative ensures that all our first responders will be able to work together to protect Howard County citizens to the fullest measure.”

In the past, emergency medical personnel would have to wait for an incident scene to be completely searched and declared safe before entering. As part of the new protocols, joint rescue teams of police and fire personnel will enter the scene under police protection to begin treating and extracting the injured, even before police have searched every part of the building. The teams will be equipped with ballistic vests, helmets, collapsible stretchers and other medical supplies. The goal is to begin to treat and evacuate victims as soon as possible.

The training stems from lessons learned in active shooting incidents nationwide, ranging from Columbine High School in 1999 to the Aurora, Colo., movie theater shooting in 2012. In January 2014, Howard County faced its own tragedy at the Columbia Mall in which two people were fatally shot by a gunman who then killed himself.

“This new training program builds upon the already strong working relationship we have with our fire department partners,” said Police Chief Gary Gardner. “Having fire and police commanders working side by side as they deploy rescue teams is a critical component to a successful coordinated response. Together, we want to do all we can to render aid as quickly and safely as possible to victims in need of help during a crisis.”

Through interactive scenarios taking place at the James N. Robey Public Safety Training Center in Marriottsville, HCDFRS members are learning to provide medical care in potentially hostile surroundings escorted by police.

“The purpose of this training is to advance our readiness should the need for a multi-agency response occur,” said Fire Chief John S. Butler. “Training based in a realistic, threatening setting is vital, and our firefighters and paramedics will have the right tools and strategies to respond to this type of incident.”

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